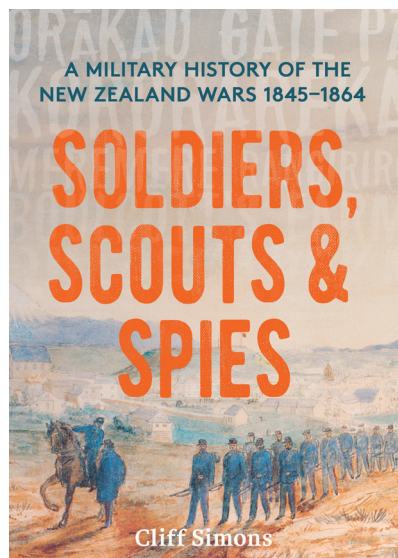


Soldiers, Scouts and Spies

A military history of the New Zealand Wars 1845–1864

CLIFF SIMONS



\$55

CATEGORY: Military History

ISBN: 978-0-9951095-7-5

eISBN: TBC

THEMA: NHW, 1MBN, 3MN

BIC: 1MBN, HBW

BISAC: HIS027130, HIS053000,
HIS037060

PUBLISHER: Massey University Press

IMPRINT: Massey University Press

PUBLISHED: October 2019

PAGE EXTENT: 432

FORMAT: Limpbound

SIZE: 230mm x 163mm

RIGHTS: World

AUTHOR RESIDENCE: Tauranga,
New Zealand

A FASCINATING AND DETAILED STUDY OF THE MAJOR CAMPAIGNS OF THE NEW ZEALAND WARS; HOW AND WHERE THE BATTLES WERE FOUGHT AND THEIR OUTCOMES

As interest in the New Zealand Wars grows, *Soldiers, Scouts & Spies* offers a unique insight into the major campaigns fought between 1845 and 1864 by British troops, their militia and Māori allies, and Māori iwi and coalitions.

It was a time of rapid technological change. Māori were quick to adopt western weaponry and evolve their tactics — and even political structures — as they looked for ways to confront the might of the Imperial war machine. And Britain, despite being a military and economic super power, was challenged by a capable enemy in a difficult environment.

This detailed examination of the Wars from a military perspective focuses on the period of relatively conventional warfare before the increasingly 'irregular' fighting of the late 1860s. It explains how and where the battles were fought, and their outcomes. Importantly, it also analyses the intelligence-gathering skills and processes of both British and Māori forces as each sought to understand and overcome their enemy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant-Colonel Cliff Simons holds a PhD in Defence and Strategic Studies from Massey University and is Director of the New Zealand Wars Study Centre at Trentham Military Camp. This book is based on his PhD on military intelligence during the New Zealand wars and his deep knowledge in this field is reflected in the engaging narrative. He is co-author of *Victory at Gate Pa?* (New Holland, 2018) with Buddy Mikaere and is based in Tauranga.

SALES POINTS

- An excellent and engaging writer, Simons brings his deep understanding of the practicalities of fighting to convey the immediacy of the conflicts; from the daring reconnaissance missions and minor skirmishes to dramatic escapes and bold campaigns.
- Brings to life the historic figures of the time, from Governors and paramount chiefs, to foot soldiers, warriors, missionaries and spies.
- Wonderful collection of illustrations and contemporary photos, plus specially commissioned maps, all help to convey the terrain and tactics in the different theatres of the wars.

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pā concealed and protected themselves in trenches behind two or even three rows of stout palisades. From there they fired from positions offering as much protection as possible while concentrating their own fire on a target such as an advancing group of enemy.

The defenders stood in trenches or on firing steps cut into the trench sides and poised their muskets through loopholes cut into the palisades at ground level. Flax matting placed on the front of the palisades obscured the attacker's view of the inside of the pā and absorbed musket balls that might have passed through gaps between the logs. Bastions were built into the corners to allow the defenders to fire along the front of the palisades, to clear out attackers who were attempting to scale the walls or to tunnel under them to plant explosives. If they were available, small ships' cannons were strategically placed to cover entrances or to fire from the bastions. The defenders living inside the pā needed protection from the elements as well as musket balls, enemy snipers and even cannon-fire, so covered shelters were built and some pā even featured underground hiding places. All of these innovations were in development during the Musket Wars and well before Māori faced British soldiers and sailors in battle.

Where did these ideas come from? First, we must acknowledge it is a primal and instinctive reaction to take cover and 'go to ground' when under fire, and this is what Māori did. They already had centuries of expertise in selecting and modifying the terrain to construct earthworks and felling logs to build palisades. All that was really required was design modifications to cater for the new threat from men with muskets and cannon. The dangers of elevation quickly led to ground-level fortifications, firing pits and connecting trenches and, eventually, overhead cover. European axes and shovels allowed a workforce of hundreds of men and women to build these new fortifications much more quickly than they had using traditional digging sticks (hō) and stone axes (hōki tītāhā).

The Ngāipahi chief Te Rahi Kōwhiri's great hill pā at Ruapekapeka in the Bay of Islands, which was constructed in late 1845 during the Northern War, is clearly a development and refinement of features used in two pā at Puketutu and Ōhauwai built earlier in 1845.³²

Pukehinahina-Gate Pā was constructed two decades later, in Tauranga in 1864, and is often regarded as the ultimate expression of this style of fortification. The virtually subterranean fort combined an excellent use of terrain and design features to allow its defenders to survive a day of heavy bombardment and

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The Māori and British Forces



Ōhauwai pā, built in 1845, viewed from the farthest British position. It had double palisades, a flax curtain — both to obscure the view into the pā and to reduce damage from musket balls — loopholes at ground level and bastions that allow the defenders to fire along the front of the palisades. Wikimedia by Heide Cyprian Bellis.

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powerful defensive system. Te Arai (The Barrier) the most inland and elevated site, had great historical and strategic significance. Te Aiawa had previously used it as a final refuge of survival. In one climactic episode 30 years earlier, in 1811, an army of Waikato warriors had laid siege to the Pukerangiora pā, just behind the new Te Arai position, for three months before eventually killing approximately 1200 men, women and children in the most gruesome way.³³ Their devastating defeat at Pukerangiora and the threat of more raids from Waikato tribes was the reason for Te Aiawa's decision in 1842 to migrate from their traditional lands in Taranaki to the Wellington region, where they hoped to find safety.³⁴

Te Arai ranks alongside Kōwhiri's Northern War fortress Ruapekapeka and Te Kōwhiri's defensive citadel Ngāitapu in Poverty Bay for the majesty and grandeur of the site and its elevated command of the surrounding countryside. To its front, the defenders could survey the extent of the disputed Potopoto Block and adjoining land right down to the Tasman Sea. More ominously, they could also watch as troops toiled relentlessly towards them, capturing pā and methodically digging two long saps. Te Arai's northern flank was unapproachable because of the steep river cliffs, and to the rear the countryside dissolved into an impenetrable, deeply dissected wilderness.

The two traditional enemies — Te Aiawa and warriors from several Waikato tribes — stood together ready to repel the inevitable attack on their series of powerful fortresses. Why had they chosen to fight here? Bellis has argued that the Kingites employed a three-element strategy in Taranaki: a war on two fronts, north and south of Taranaki; a policy of raiding and destroying settler property; and development of a flexible cordon of pā around the town itself.³⁵ While some evidence for the first and third elements is discernible, the second is little more than an ancient soldiers' art of pillage, which Māori themselves had practiced for generations as part of their different modes of warfare. Nevertheless, by December 1860, none of those elements was still in place.

The tide of war had changed dramatically. Pukerangiora had been the high point of Kingite military ascendancy but since then several factors had changed the equation. Pratt had arrived, and he had begun to project military power both north and south of New Plymouth, using economic and psychological warfare by destroying villages, pā and cultivations. The size of his force had grown to about 2000, and he personally displayed tenacity, resolve and a much more intelligent approach than his predecessors in his conduct of the war. He had also brought

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The Conflict Widens



Top View of the Waikato River out to the coast from Pukerangiora pā. Above: Remnants of the British saps up to Te Arai.

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The 38th (Welsh) Brigade of Foot on parade at the Albert Military Barracks in Auckland. The 38th was one of 14 British Army regiments to serve in New Zealand between 1840 and 1870. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY, E-209-0-1-034



Royal Artillery officer, defined the term 'small wars' in his *Small Wars: Their principles and practice* as:

all campaigns other than those in which both sides consist of regular troops. It comprises the expeditions against savages and semi-civilized races by disciplined soldiers, it comprises campaigns undertaken to suppress rebellions and guerrilla warfare in all parts of the world where organized armies are struggling against opponents who will not meet them in the open field, and it thus obviously covers operations very varying in their scope and in their conditions.³⁶

The central idea behind 'small war' was not the size of the conflict, but the fact that one side was a regular 'trained and organized army' and the other was irregular, or as one contemporary observer noted, 'was with people who wear not trousers'.³⁷

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Colonial Warfare and Military Intelligence

Callwell's book was a summary of a century of colonial warfare by different imperial powers in different colonial settings, but most importantly, it was a distillation of the knowledge acquired and a manual for how to do it. It has since become a minor classic that is regarded as a definitive work of the period,³⁸ and interestingly, his lessons have resonated through to the present day.

The book was written at the height of the imperial period, and in his introduction to the third edition of *Small Wars* in 1906, military historian Douglas Poth suggests that although Callwell was definitely a man of his time, he strangely also offers a vision of the future of combat.³⁹ World War I was thought to have completely changed military thinking, and it appeared that Callwell's world of small wars and colonial conflict was no longer relevant; however, the United States Marine Corps published a *Small Wars Manual* in 1940 that contained lessons from conflicts in the Philippines, China and the Caribbean, and it has recently been updated.

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